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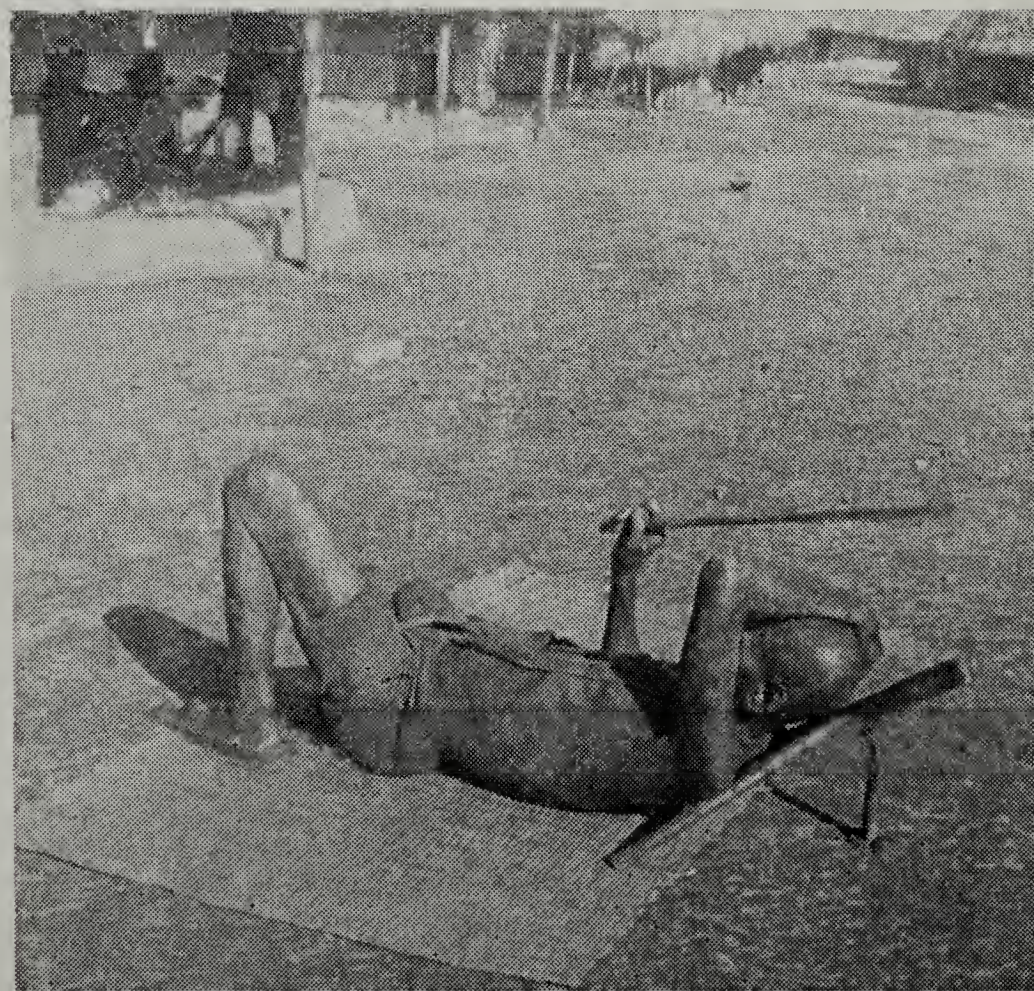
GANTA

A HANDMADE MISSION

By BETTY BURLEIGH



A Ganta Leper



GANTA

A HANDMADE MISSION

Deep in the Liberian jungles stands Ganta, the unique handmade mission. The buildings that house this famed Methodist medical and educational center are fashioned from lumber, tile and brick made on the mission station under the direction of Ganta's brilliant founder and director, Dr. George Way Harley. The hub of central Liberia's inland section, Ganta is the place where natives learn everything from Christianity to carpentry and scientific swamp drainage. It's home to 200 lepers who live on their own farm that the doctor built for them near the station. To Ganta stream hundreds of other natives sick with all kinds of tropical ailments, black men who know the healing power of the white doctor's magic.

INTO THE JUNGLE

The rich, romantic tale of the success of Ganta is the story of Dr. Harley and his brave wife, Winifred, who went into this jungle wilderness to establish the mission in 1926. But first the idea of this mission was formed in the mind of Dr. T. S. Donohugh of the Board of Missions and Church Extension of The Methodist Church. Although the Methodists had long established missions along Liberia's coast, this great section of the central interior was untouched by the word of God. In these un-charted jungles lived thousands of black men who depended upon ignorant witch doctors for their medical care. These



Figures wearing such masks as this formerly were regarded as gods, or nearly so. Now they are called "country devils," a tacit acknowledgment that Christianity has superseded them

treatments are colorfully described in Dr. Harley's absorbing book, "Native African Medicine," published by the Harvard University Press.

Before the introduction of Christianity the main religion of these tribes was ancestor worship and vestiges of it remain in some localities today. To represent different spirits, leaders of the religious cults put on hideous wooden masks that succeed in terrifying the people. These masked figures performed at religious orgies to



This open hut is the "palaver house," built in the center of the village especially for sitting and talking the village gossip. The people have plenty of leisure. Here also the chief hears plenty of complaints



This worthy is a medicine man of the traditional type. He is often feared and has great power

which only initiated men and older boys were admitted. Women and children were barred. They or any other non-members caught peeking were immediately put to death. Now, instead of being used in this religion of terror, several hundred of these masks, which were collected by Dr. Harley, are displayed at the Peabody Museum at Harvard where Harley is a field associate in anthropology.

To gain permission to start a mission among these tribes, Dr. Donohugh presented his idea to Liberia's president, who was wary of any enterprise that would force western

ways on his people and make them dissatisfied with their lot. "We don't want to destroy the values in the natives' way," Dr. Donohugh explained. "Let us come in and show them how to improve the things they have and use them to best advantage. Let them share their knowledge with us, while we share ours with them." This idea of an "exchange center" where his subjects would not be indoctrinated with standards above their means, won the president's approval and support. He invited Dr. Donohugh to meet the chiefs from the interior at a conference which was being held at a native village. There Dr. Donohugh laid the plans before the gaudily dressed native leaders who welcomed the sending of a missionary. Ganta, the principal village among 600,000 natives, was chosen as the site for this new experiment in missions.

GEORGE HARLEY

The church was then faced with the task of finding the accomplished jack of all trades who was capable of founding this mission, on the success of which hung the salvation of thousands. The person sent to Ganta must be a missionary, a doctor, a farmer, a machinist, a carpenter. And above all he must possess ingenuity, for the promise had been made, "We will show the people how to use the things they have."

Dynamic young George Way Harley, with an M.D. from Yale and a B.A. from Trinity College, Durham, N. C., fitted the bill perfectly. The son of a Methodist minister, the late Rev. G. G. Harley, he had learned carpentry and farming in and around his home town, Asheville, N. C., and was possessed with a desire to go to Africa. His bride, the former Winifred Jewell of Merrimac, Mass., had a useful background too, for she'd worked as a pho-

tographic technician in the Department of Pathology and school in New England. After acceptance by the Board, Bacteriology at Yale's School of Medicine and had taught the couple majored in anthropology at the Kennedy School of Missions in Hartford, Conn., where Harley also took a night course in mechanics. Then they went to London, where the doctor enrolled in the School of Tropical Medicine and his wife studied midwifery at a women's hospital.

With this exceptional training the young Harleys reached Monrovia. When, with their native guides, they started the long trek to Ganta, about 200 miles inland, they waved goodbye to civilization as they watched Liberia's capital city fade from sight. Then they turned their faces toward the jungle where God had called them. For seven days they walked and rode in hammocks borne by natives and at last reached the village. The



This was the missionaries' residence, built of mud, sticks, and thatch. Up on the ridge pole Dr. Harley directs the work

natives, curious but friendly, helped Dr. Harley build his first residence of mud, sticks and thatch, the standard building materials. When he found that these houses deteriorated fast in the heat and rain, he set about to improve matters. Soon he began experimenting with local materials. Open mouthed, the natives watched him making tile and brick and using rammed earth and lumber.



Logs were slabbed by hand power, brought to Ganta on home-made trucks—the first wheels seen there—and sawed by hand. This was the very first log. It was of rosewood and was made into furniture

Fascinated they helped eagerly and learned these wonders.

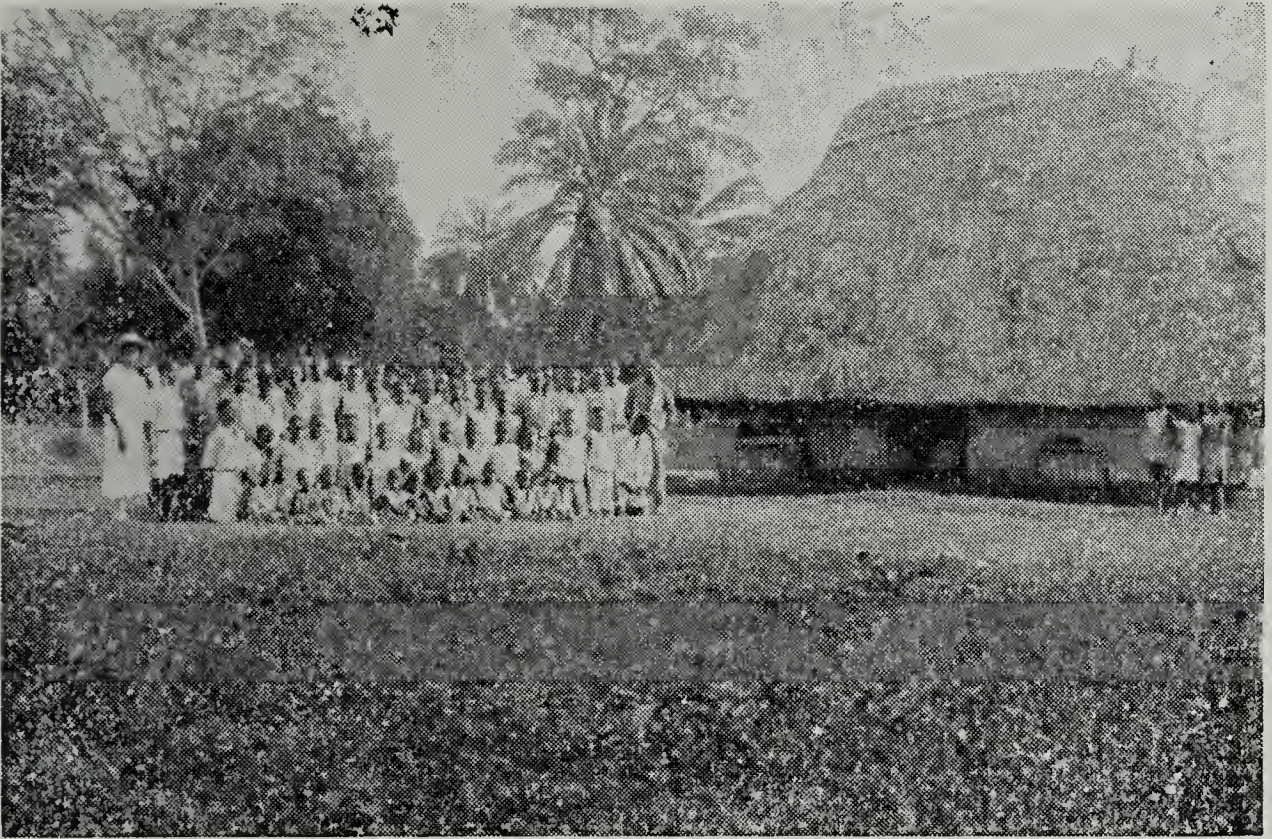
MAGIC MEDICINE

The Methodist Board of Missions and Church Extension is co-operating in building a new general hospital which is now going up at Ganta. Already Dr. Harley has one wing half finished but, until this project is completed, he



In due time better saws were rigged up. But still the work is hard and slow. The people are learning how to use what they have

carries on his medical work in the present dispensary of hand sawed logs. As the only doctor among thousands, his medical work is perhaps his most important. On arrival at the Ganta he treated a few patients and soon his fame spread like fire through the dark jungles. With leaping hopes the sick poured into the mission to see



One of the boys' classes at Ganta standing near the first schoolhouse erected at Ganta. As the teaching spread, better houses were built

the miracle maker, and they still do! Even the tribal medicine men started coming for treatment, curious and eager to try this new magic. Regardless of superstition, the difference between cure and infirmity speaks for itself. For the lepers, Dr. Harley built a farm complete with houses near the mission, where segregated, they cannot contaminate others and where they are easily available for treatment. In 1944 at the leper colony the

doctor opened the Raymo dispensary for the exclusive use of lepers, and he's now experimenting with a local oil to be used for leper injections instead of the imported chaulmoogra oil. Recognizing the greatness of this man, the American Mission to Lepers has appropriated \$5,000 to aid Dr. Harley in his work among those afflicted with this ancient disease.

Because the hypodermic needle is used in many treatments, a lot of natives believe that the "magic needle" cures anything, not realizing that the needle itself is merely the instrument for introducing the proper medicine into their blood streams. Many beg for the needle no matter what ails them and are upset if they don't get a "hypo." Yaws, a loathsome disease that develops sores on the skin, is prevalent around Ganta. The doctor combats this with injections of a bismuth compound.

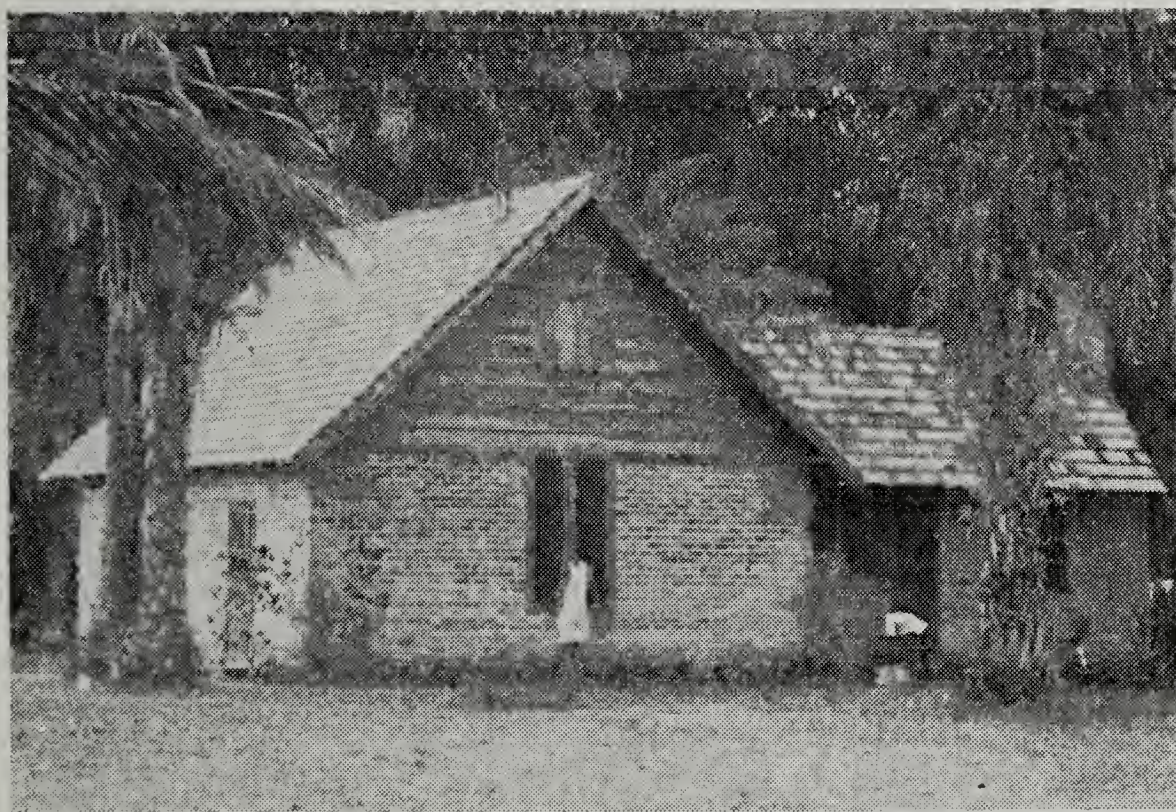
In an average week he admits 125 new patients, gives 400 injections for leprosy, 500 for yaws, 200 for sleeping sickness, treats 100 abdominal cases and gives 100 lab examinations. A fee of about 25 cents a year entitles patients to all the medical care they need, and this helps make the work self-supporting.

SOIL, SOULS, AND SAWS

In the elementary school fifty boys, many of them sons of chiefs, are enrolled. In the afternoons the boys work on the model farm in order to learn scientific methods and to help with their keep. This, plus the tuition of a dollar a term, does not make the work self-supporting but psychologically it makes the school desirable. Africans, just like all other peoples of the earth, do not understand the value of anything that is given outright.

Church services and Sunday School are held on the second floor of the school building though Dr. Harley is

planning the construction of a chapel. The school, dormitories for students, medical buildings, leper colony, model farm, carpenter's shop and machine shop, all Harley built, are architectural testimonials of the doctor's successful experiments. The school blackboards, for instance, are plastered with a Harley concoction that includes burned snail shells. At first all lumber used in Ganta was cut by hand but when Dr. Harley got his hands on an old Ford engine he rigged up a sawmill. The water wheel, which also runs a corn grinder, charges the batteries for the mill and the mission truck. Dr. Harley's ingenuity is boundless. Once when his supply of imported medicinal alcohol ran low, he distilled his own from a mash of fermented bananas! And now he's experimenting with pottery glazes and is working on a new book on the life of native tribes in conjunction with Dr. George Schwab, a retired missionary.



This is the staff house or missionaries' home at Ganta, built of bricks and tiles made on the ground

In Ganta's elaborate carpenter shop natives turn out remarkably beautiful hand-made furniture. Recently Liberia's president ordered a complete mahogany dining room set from these expert workmen.



This is the assistant teacher and agriculturist, a son of the soil trained at Ganta

It is almost twenty years since Mrs. Harley went with her husband to help him forge the mission in this jungle community. Through it all she's worked side by side with him, teaching, helping in the dispensary and training native hospital assistants. The Harleys had three sons, all born on the mission field. One died at four years. The elder son, Robert, is a Radio Technician in the Navy and the younger, Eugene, is enrolled in the New Hampton School at New Hampton, N. H.

Ganta is a *Parish Abroad* project of the First Methodist Church of New Haven, Conn., and affiliated groups in the New Haven District. Other missionaries serving at the station are Miss Mildred Black, Miss Ruth Longstaff and Mr. and Mrs. B. B. Cofield, all of whom became interested in the work at Ganta while studying in New Haven and attending First Church.

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